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Anthrax, vaccinations and climate change : media coverage of the 2016 Yamal emergency

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Anthrax, vaccinations and climate change media coverage of the 2016 Yamal emergency



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Background

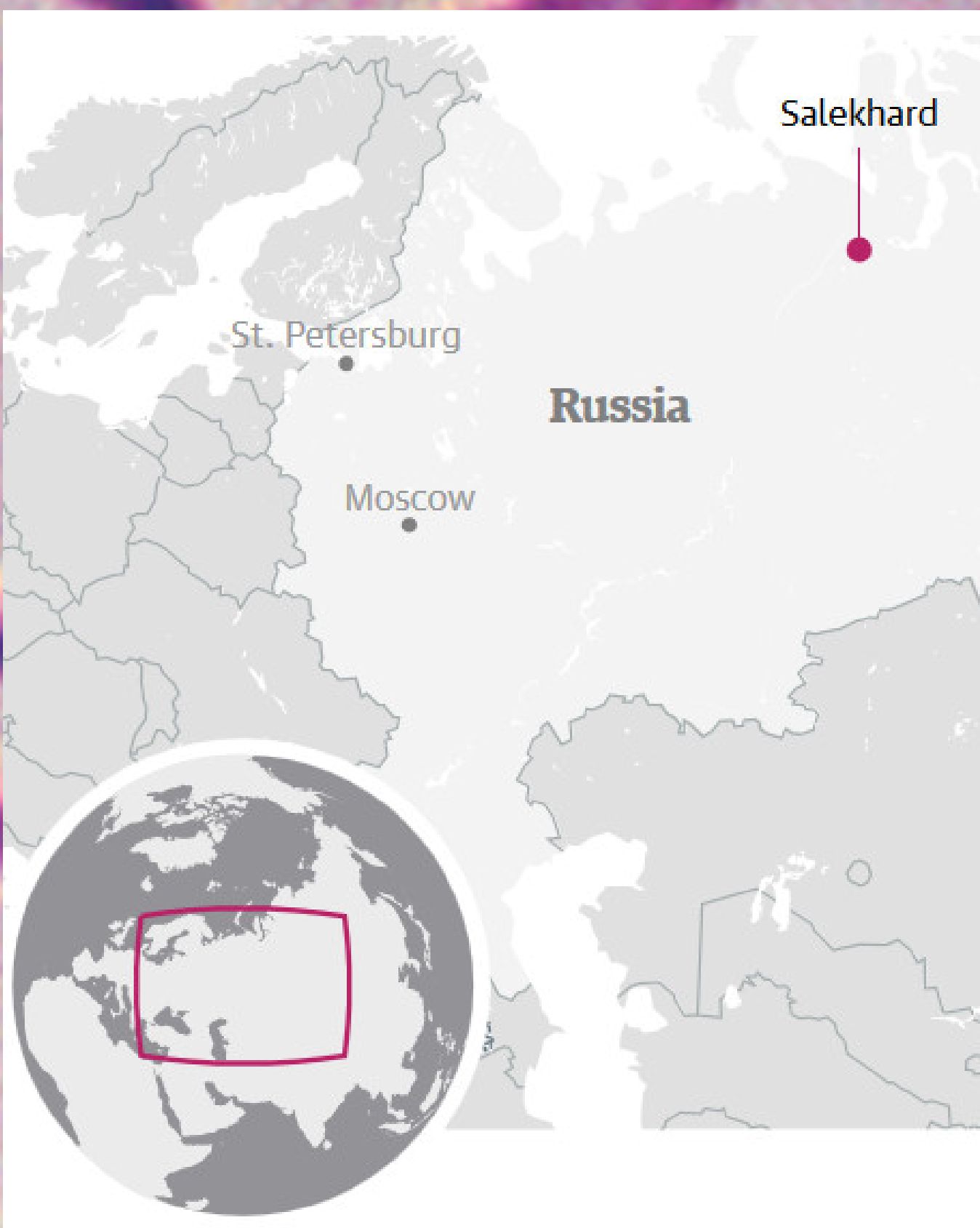
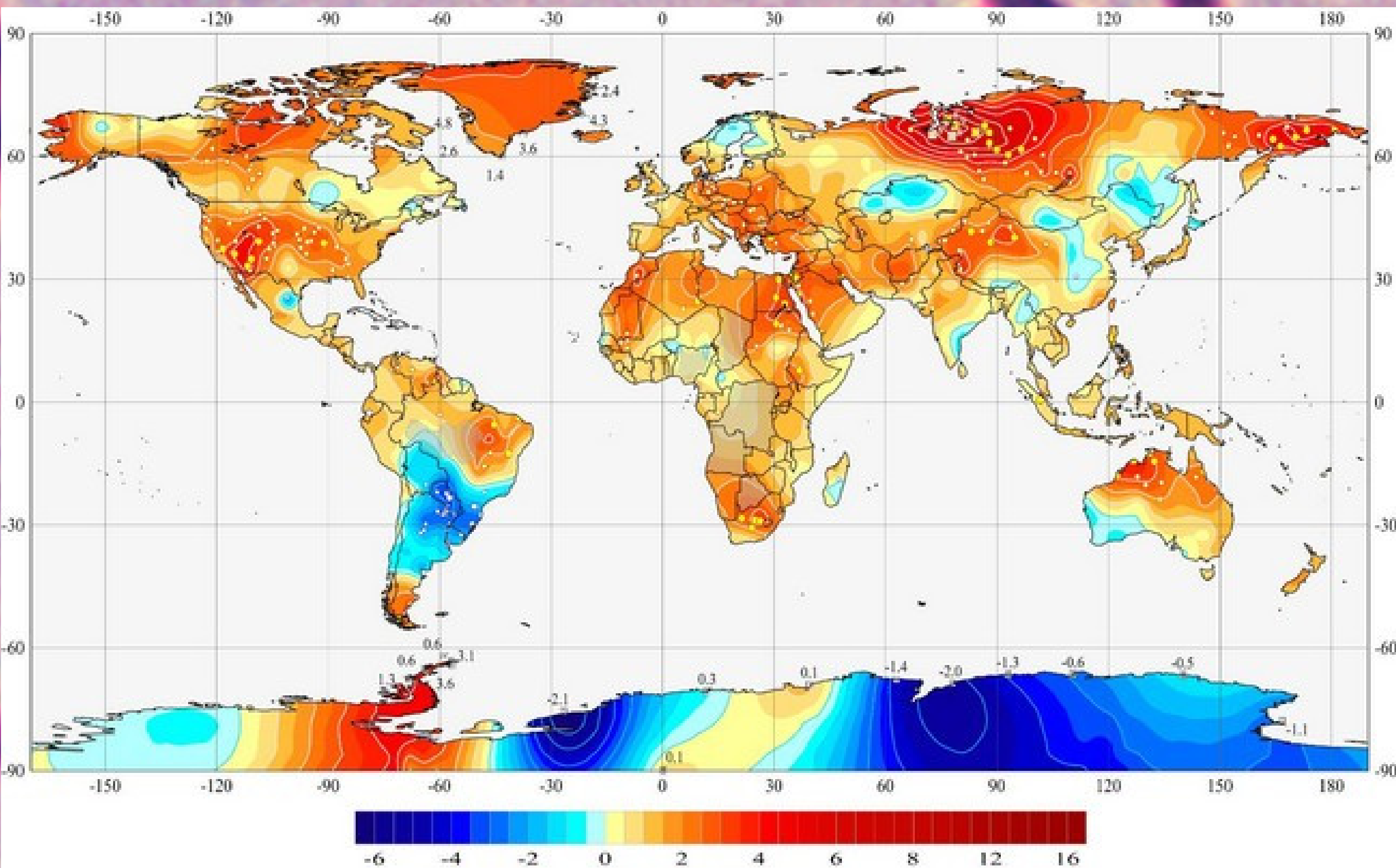
In July 2016, Russian media reported on an **anthrax outbreak** on the Yamal peninsula. The extremely hot weather was first to blame, followed by numerous references to global climate change. High temperatures were seen causing permafrost melting and the “awakening” of anthrax bacteria that infected thousands of reindeer.

Dozens of children had to be hospitalized, at least one child died. While climate-related explanations in the media lowered liabilities of the local officials, a number of competing versions, including about improper vaccinations and excessive commercialization of reindeer herding, were widely discussed too.

The Yamal authorities imposed quarantine measures. Military biological troops participated in the liquidation operations throughout August 2016.

In November, the International Symposium “Preventing the dissemination of infectious animal diseases on climate change” was opened in the regional capital city of Salekhard.

World's highest temperature anomalies (8.0 - 9.3 Celsius) recorded at five meteorological stations in the Yamal-Nenets Autonomous District in June-July 2016



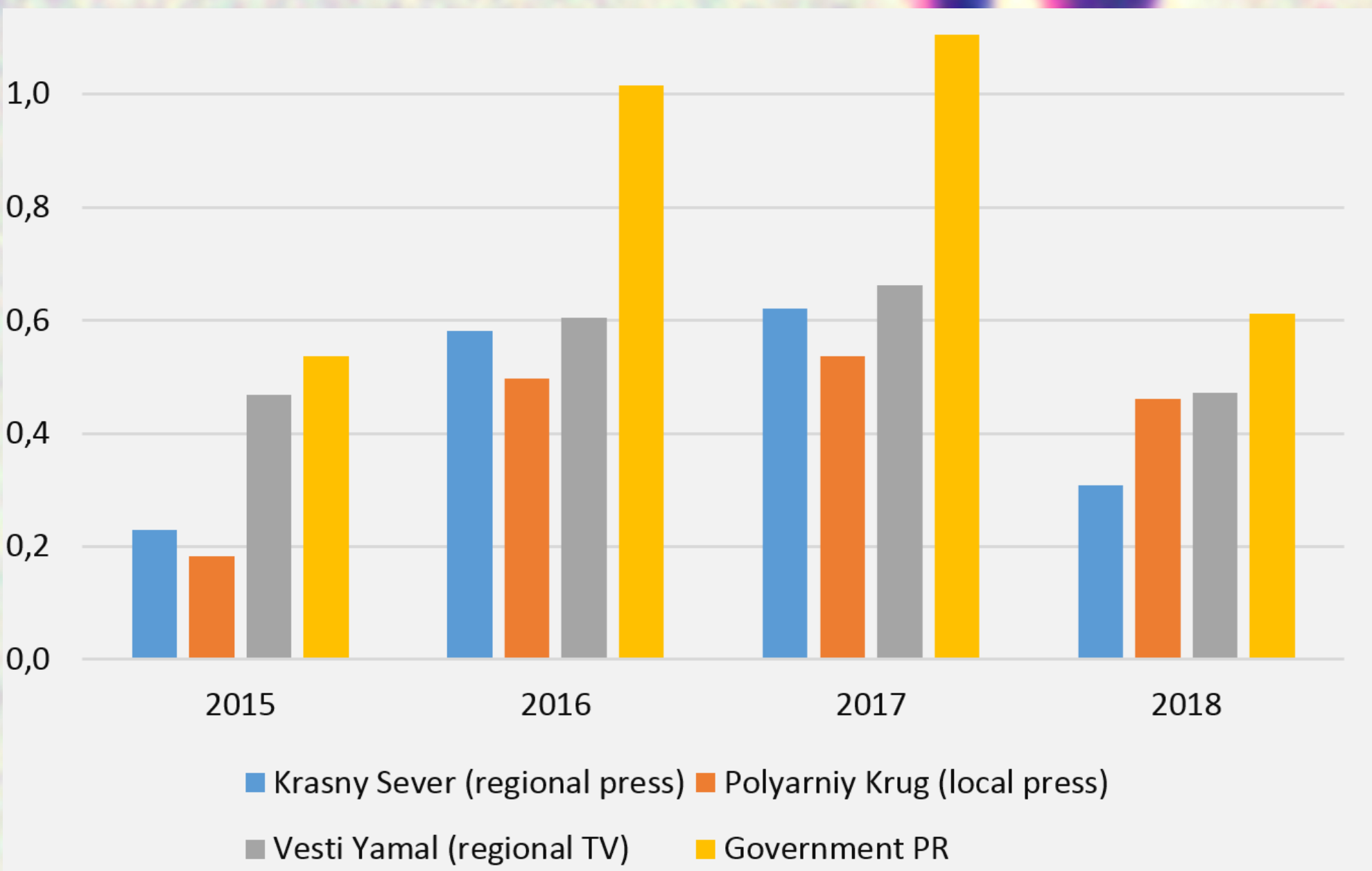
Research questions

- What is the role of mass media in raising public awareness about climate-induced health threats?
- How did media frame potential causes of the emergency, as well as the immediate solutions and future preventive measures?
- How does journalism “know” about climate change and its consequences?
- How do journalists make sense of climate-related issues as part of local debates, scientific discourse, and power struggles?

Methodology

- Quantitative content analysis of local, regional, and national media outlets
- 18 interviews with journalists (9) and scientists (9) in Yamal (August 2018)
- Discourse analysis

Share of "climate change" stories in the regional news (%)



Results

Table. Co-occurrences of “anthrax” with some climate-related keywords in the samples of National (n = 78) and Regional news media publications (August 2016)

Keywords	National N = 78	Regional N = 303
“heat” or “hot”	34%	10%
“climate change” or “warming”	20%	2%
“vaccination”	19%	26%



Research institutions and affiliations



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